

it's my feeling we'll win in the end by queer_we_are

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Relationships: Eleven | Jane Hopper/Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Robin Buckley & Will Byers (friends), Will Byers/Mike Wheeler

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Summary:

Dustin has Steve to go to for advice, and Will has Robin.

Basically Robin being a lesbian aunt/gay yoda for Will as he comes to terms with his identity and his love for Mike.

1. don't you try and pretend

Summary for the Chapter:

"You like girls..." he says slowly.

"Yep."

"Like, as friends?"

"Yes as friends. But also... as not friends."

"You mean," says Will cautiously, "as... enemies?"

Or

Steve thinks Will might have something in common with Robin and begs her to hang out with him. They watch 80's movies and tell each other their most closely guarded secrets (what a gay mood btw).

"I'm just saying," grumbles Steve while opening yet another box of tapes to shelve, "you could at least talk to him."

"And I'm *just saying* that I don't think it's a good idea," whispers Robin.

"What, do you think I'm wrong about him being, you know..."

"No," sighs Robin, "I think he definitely is."

"Well then shouldn't you try to reach out? Tell him he's not alone and stuff?"

"I don't want to push him..."

"Then don't! Just *talk* to him," pleads Steve. "I would do it myself, but it's not exactly my area of expertise."

"No shit. Look, I know you like playing Yoda for these kids, but I'm still not sure-" starts Robin, before she's elbowed silent by Steve as he spots Will approaching the checkout.

“Hi guys!” beams Will as he sets down three tapes on the counter.

“Hey buddy! What is it tonight?” asks Steve, looking at the tapes. “Ah, *The Goonies*, *Back to the Future*, and *The Breakfast Club*. Awesome choices.”

“Thanks! I’ve seen them all before, but they’re too good not to rewatch.”

“Nice, bud!” He clears his throat awkwardly. “Well, uh, I have to go... unpack some boxes in the back now. I’ll let Robin check you out.” He nudges her with an almost impressive lack of subtlety as he leaves.

“Oh ok, bye Steve! See you later!”

“So, *The Breakfast Club* , huh? That’s one of my favourites,” says Robin as she puts in a bag for him.

“Me too,” grins Will. “I like how they’re all weirdos but they find each other and then they’re weirdos together.”

“Yeah, that’s really cool,” she nods. Then, thinking of Steve’s pleas, she continues, “So, uh, are you watching it with any other weirdos tonight?”

“No, Mom and Jonathan are working and everyone in the Party is busy, so tonight it’s just me.” He sounds a little sad when he says it.

“Well you know what, I’ve been meaning to rewatch that one again. Do you think I could watch with you?” She sees the panic in the boy’s eyes and hastily adds, “As friends.”

“Oh. Yeah! That would be great,” says Will. He accepts partly because he doesn’t want to be rude, but mostly because he’s been lonelier than he cares to admit lately and wasn’t looking forward to a night by himself. “How about seven?”

“Sounds good! I’ll bring snacks,” smiles Robin.

And bring snacks she does. When she shows up to the Byers house a few minutes past seven, her arms are burdened with no less than six grocery bags filled with chips, pop, candy, chocolate, and every other snack food imaginable.

“Woah,” says Will as he opens the door.

“Yeah. I may have gone overboard,” she says, dumping some of the bags into his arms. “But you’re a growing boy and I skipped dinner so I think we might be able to do it.”

Will somewhat awkwardly welcomes her in and shows her around. They hangout sometimes with Steve and the rest of the Party, but they’ve never hung out alone before. Earlier, when she had suggested they watch the movie together, Will had actually thought for one horrifying moment that she meant as a date. But once she had cleared that up, he actually started to look forward to the movie night. Now that she’s actually here, though, in his living room, arms piled high with more junk food than he’s ever seen, he’s not exactly sure what to say. Luckily for him, Robin talks enough for the both of them.

“Nice place, Byers,” she’s saying. “Although Steve told me the first time he was here there was a giant hole in the wall, christmas lights everywhere, and an extra-dimensional monster in the living room, so I have to say this is a little underwhelming.” That makes him laugh and he feels himself start to relax. They chat a little while longer before Will pops the tape into the VCR. They settle back into the couch with drinks and candy in hand as the movie starts to play.

A few minutes in, Robin says, “Man, Molly Ringwald is a babe.” Will chokes on his orange soda.

“Uh, yeah,” he answers after a few seconds. Then, for the next few minutes, he replays the short interaction in his head. Her out-of-

nowhere statement. The enthusiasm in her voice as she said it. The lack of enthusiasm in his as he answered. Huh.

A little while after that she goes, "That jock kid is cute too, I guess?"

"Yeah!" says Will before he can think about it. He feels his cheeks warm, but Robin doesn't look away from the screen so he figures he's okay. Then once again, he runs through the conversation in his head. The lack of enthusiasm in her voice, the over-enthusiasm in his. Hmm.

They aren't exactly quiet for the rest of the movie, but Robin doesn't comment on anyone else's attractiveness so Will doesn't mind. Instead they talk about the song choices (excellent), the casting (perfect), and which of the characters they're most like (both of them think they're equal parts Allison and Brian). They chat and laugh the whole movie long. In fact, sometime between the first scene and the last iconic shot, they find that they've become friends.

"Good choice, Will! That movie kicked ass," says Robin as she gets up to stretch. "And look, we finished at least a third of the snacks."

"We should enter one of those competitive eating contests," grins Will. "I've never eaten that much junk food in my life."

"Never? Well I guess that makes me a bad influence," she says proudly. "I've always wanted to be one of those." Will laughs, then smiles at her.

"Thanks for coming over tonight, this was really fun."

"Of course, man! You're a fun person to hang out with," says Robin fondly. "I'm glad we're getting to know each other better."

"Me too."

"Cause, uh, I feel like maybe we still have stuff to learn about each other," says Robin gingerly. "For example, you probably don't know

that I have a cat named Albert... or that my favourite colour is yellow... or that I like girls." She says it so casually that Will doesn't process what she's said for a full fifteen seconds.

"You like girls..." he says slowly.

"Yep."

"Like, as friends?"

"Yes as friends. But also... as *not* friends."

"You mean," says Will cautiously, "as... enemies?"

"No bro, not as enemies! I mean I like girls as *more* than friends."

"Oh." Oh. *Oh*.

Robin shifts uncomfortably in her seat. Her motion brings him back to himself and he realises that he's been sitting there frozen with his mouth hanging open and his eyes wide for the better part of a minute. He has to say something.

"That's really cool!" he sputters out.

"Yeah?" she almost laughs, looking relieved.

"Totally!"

"Oh. I'm glad you think so, man," she says. "We don't have to, like, talk about it if you don't want to. I just that I'd like you know cause--"

"Actually, do you think we could?" asks Will shyly.

"Huh?"

"Talk about it?"

"Oh, yeah sure. Ask me anything you want," says Robin.

"Uh, when did you... know?"

"About half way through eighth grade, probably," she answers honestly. "That's when I realized it probably wasn't normal that I stared at girls' butts as often as I did." Her openness sort of shocks Will and he lets out a startled little laugh.

"Sorry," he says quickly.

"Dude, don't be. Like I said, I'm pretty comfortable with it all. Ask me literally anything."

"Ok," smiles Will. "So, uh, who else knows about you?"

"Steve."

"That's it?"

"Well, Steve and you."

"Oh," he says surprised. "Thank you, then. For telling me."

"Your very welcome, William," says Robin, smiling. She can tell he has more questions. "Go on, kid. Ask." He nods.

"Ok so why... uh, I mean what... what about girls..." he fumbles. Robin nods at him and he continues, "What do you... like about girls?"

"Finally an easy question!" She breaks into a grin. "Let's see... I love the way their hair always smells like lavender or vanilla or coconut. I love how soft their hands are and I love their painted nails. I love the way their glossed lips look warm and soft. I love the way they look when they tie their hair up and I love the way they look when they take it down. I love the way they talk, the way they smile, the way they laugh. I love... I mean, *everything* ." She realises she's been talking for a long time and she smiles sheepishly at Will. "Uh, does that answer your question?"

"Yeah," he answers softly.

"So, anything else you want to know? Or tell me?" She's giving him an easy opportunity. It would be so easy to say it, to tell her.

"I think that's it," he says instead.

"Okay." She smiles at him understandingly. "So, are we gonna watch another movie or what?"

"Sure," says Will. "Which one?"

"Well we've got *Back to the Future* and *The Goonies* here. What do you like?"

"I like..." he says, thinking, "...boys." He slaps a hand over his mouth. He had *not* been expecting to say that. Who the fuck did his mouth think it was, talking without his permission like that? "I like boys," he says again, quieter.

"That's really cool," says Robin softly. She looks like she wants to give him a hug but he's folded into himself, clutching his knees in a little ball. She holds her hand out for a high five instead. It takes a few seconds for Will to spot it and when he does he taps her palm with his own weakly. "Oh come on, that high five was weaksauce, dude." That makes him give a shaky laugh. She holds out her hand again and he slaps it a little more firmly. "That's it." He starts crying and now she does pull him into a hug. "That's it," she says softly. "That's it."

It only takes him a few minutes to calm down in her arms. When he stops crying he pulls away and smiles weakly.

"Sorry."

"You have nothing to be sorry for, dummy," she reassures him. "Do you want to talk about it?"

"No," he answers automatically. Then a minute later, "Yes. I do. Please."

"Okay," she says. When Will stays quiet, she sees that he'll need a little prodding. "So, when did *you* know?"

"For as long as I can remember. Since kindergarten at least."

“Wow. I wish I’d figured it out that young.”

“I wish I hadn’t.” He doesn’t continue and she doesn’t pry.

“Does anyone know?”

“No,” he says. “Well, I haven’t told anyone. It sort of seems like everyone knows. I mean, you knew, right?”

“I... guessed,” she says cautiously. “But I didn’t *know*, Will. No one *knows* unless you tell them. Until then they might think it, but who cares what they think, right?”

“Right,” he says, somewhat unconvinced.

“So,” she says playfully after a minute, “what do you like about boys?” That makes him blush and he doesn’t plan to answer but there goes his mouth without his permission again. Like it just can’t keep the words inside any longer.

“I love the way you can feel the rumble of their voice in your own chest when they talk. I love the way they always smell a little bit like the woods and after you’re near them you smell like that too. I love that when they hug you you feel like you could get lost in them. I love that they can be strong or brave, but kind at the same time. I love it when they laugh a little too loud or when they smile at you so brightly that you think you might die. I love their freckles and I love that they haven’t quite grown into the length of their limbs yet.” He cuts himself off, worried he’s said too much. But Robin just smiles at him.

“Dang man, you might make *me* like dudes with a list like that,” she jokes. She sighs happily, “Man, it’s so nice to talk to you about this. I’ve never had any gay friends before.”

“Well, you do now.”

“Yeah,” she says, “I do now.”

Notes for the Chapter:

The work and chapter titles are from the song "Don't

You (Forget About Me)" by Simple Minds.

Also, I would just like to mention that writing the paragraph where Will lists all the things he loves about men was extremely difficult for me to write as a huge lesbian. I literally stared at my keyboard for half an hour going "hmm what are people attracted to in men... I have no idea". I hope you appreciate my efforts lmao

Please leave a comment letting me know what you think! Reading them always makes my day :-)

2. tell me your troubles and doubts

Summary for the Chapter:

Will plays D&D with the Party then stays over for a sleepover with Mike after. All of which is normal. So why the fuck is his stomach doing this stupid fluttery-nervous thing?

There are some things in this world that are impossible to go through together without becoming friends. Coming out to each other while sobbing and watching *The Breakfast Club* is one of those things, apparently. After that first eventful movie night, Robin and Will have become inseparable. Now they're a duo, they're a pair, they're RobinAndWill.

Today, like most weekdays, Will swings by Family Video as Robin finishes her shift.

"Hey Dingus, your child is here," calls Steve as Will steps into the store.

"You love saying that don't you," says Robin, rolling her eyes as she takes off her work vest. "Ok Harrington, I admit it. It's not *that* weird to be friends with children."

"*Thank you.*"

"I object to being called a child," interjects Will. "I'm, like, basically fifteen."

"You're right," says Steve as he ruffles his hair, "You're practically a senior citizen!" Will gives an indignant huff.

"Okay Byers, ready to go?" says Robin, swinging over the counter.

"Yep! Bye Steve!"

"Bye Robin Williams!" (Steve's nickname for the pair. It has yet to

catch on with anyone but him, but he was very proud when he thought of it).

“So what is it today? Arcade? Movies?” asks Robin as they step out into the lazy August warmth.

“Actually I was thinking I could show you the woods near my house. You haven’t seen Castle Byers yet,” he says. Then he frowns, “I know it’s kind of childish or whatever to have a fort, but-”

“Man, having a fort in the woods isn’t childish; it’s awesome!” she beams as she hops into the driver’s seat of her rusty second (or third or fourth) hand car. She waits until he gets in before continuing, “I’m pumped to see it!”

“Oh, great!” He pauses. “So you really don’t, like, mind hanging out with me? Even though I’m younger?”

“*Mind* hanging out with you?” she says incredulously. “Hell no, dude! We’re bros.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.”

“Dude, I think I’m too big for Castle Byers,” says Robin as she surveys the small building.

“Me too, probably,” he says. They look at each other solemnly for a minute, then grin as they duck into the little fort anyway. It’s the first time he’s been in here in a while. He takes in the tiny room. He’s had to do some serious renovations and rebuilding since that one unfortunate night in the rain, but it still looks pretty much the same as ever.

“This is so cool,” whispers Robin. “It’s like we have our own little world!”

“We don’t have to whisper, there’s no one else out here,” he says, his comment somewhat undermined by the fact that he’s also whispering. They erupt into giggles.

“Seriously dude, this kicks so much ass,” she says, at a normal volume now. Then she grins wickedly, “Is this where you bring boys for *alone time* ?” She makes exaggerated and obnoxious kissy noises at him. He shoves her.

“Shut up! As if.” His cheeks are red, but he’s smiling.

They chat for a while about their days, about the newest U2 album, about what superpowers they would choose and why. All the important things in life. It’s been so easy to just be together for the last few weeks. Will can talk to her in a way he can’t really talk to anyone else, not even Jonathan or Mike. Even when they’re talking about stupid shit like whether flight or invisibility would be a better power, he feels more understood and seen with her than anyone else.

Which isn’t to say she can’t be very, very irritating sometimes. Right now, for example.

“But *why* can’t you tell me who you like?” she whines as she pokes him in the ribs. Somehow in the last few minutes she has steered the conversation back to Will’s love life.

“I can’t tell you who I like, because I don’t like anyone,” he grumbles unconvincingly.

“Bull *shit* you don’t like anyone! Come on! I told you who *I* like!”

“Yeah, some girl I’ve never even heard of. Doesn’t count.”

“Tammy goes to our school! You’ve definitely seen her; she’s impossible to miss as literally the most gorgeous person there!”

“Like I said, I don’t know her so it doesn’t count.”

"How does it not..." Robin pauses and looks like she's doing some calculations in her head. "Wait does that mean *you* like someone *I* know?" The boy's blush deepens.

"No!" he chokes. "Because I. don't. Like. Anyone." God, he's such a liar. They both know it, but Robin lets him off the hook.

"Sure," she says, only rolling her eyes a little. "Well you'll meet the guy for you one day. Maybe soon, who knows?" Hmm. The guy for him. Meet. Soon. Shit!

"Shit shit shit!" swears Will as he checked his watch. "I was supposed to be at Mike's for the game, like, ten minutes ago. I totally blanked!"

"Woah okay, don't worry my dude," says Robin. "I've got a car so I can get you there in, like, five minutes. Three if I speed." Her younger friend looks at her thankfully. "Go on, grab your stuff! I'll meet you at the car."

"Thank you thank you thank you Robin!" yells Will as he runs ahead to the house. "You're the best!"

"Yes I am."

Seven minutes later, he's stumbling into the Wheeler's basement to a chorus of "hey Will!"s.

"Sorry I'm late!"

"Yeah what the fuck Byers, we've been waiting for hours and hours," moans Lucas dramatically. Max slaps him from her seat next to him on the couch.

"Oh shut it, Stalker. You got here literally thirty seconds ago," she says.

"Hang on, hang on," says Dustin. "Were you with *Robin* again?"

"Yeah. Sorry, we just lost track of time-"

“Too busy sucking face?” jeers Dustin.

“ *What?* ” His cheeks warm. “No!” Did his friends actually think- ?

“Come on Dustin-” starts Mike before Lucas talks over him.

“Yeah *come on* Dustin, they’re definitely not dating,” he says. Will’s relieved for a second, but something in Lucas’ voice makes him pause. He continues impishly, “She’s waaaaaay out of his league. I bet Will just pines after her with those stupid puppy dog eyes.” The red on Will’s face deepens.

“It’s really not like that-” he begins again before El cuts him off.

“I don’t understand,” she says, puzzled. “Does Will love Robin now?”

“No!” shouts Will. God did this conversation get away from him. “Well maybe as a friend but not...” As Will tries to explain the difference between romantic and platonic love to a very confused Eleven, everyone starts talking over each other, telling jokes and trying to get the others’ attention until the room has erupted into that unique *new-teenagers-on-a-sugar-high-on-a-friday-night* brand of chaos.

When they quiet down for a minute to stare in shock at Max, who has just told *the* dirtiest joke they have ever heard, Will takes the opportunity to restate his point.

“Anyway, guys, Robin and I really are just friends,” he says. Then, thinking of how Robin would say it, he adds, “Just... bros.” *Lame.* Sounds cooler when she says it.

“ *Just bros ?* ” repeats Lucas. “You can’t be just bros with a girl!”

“What about me and Eleven? We’re bros,” says Max, throwing an arm around her. Eleven’s brow furrows and Will thinks he sees her frown.

“That doesn’t count,” argues Lucas. “I meant a *guy* can’t be just bros with a girl.”

“But Mike and I are... bros,” says El. This word is new to her, but she

thinks she knows what it means. Mike frowns when she says it, but doesn't interject indignantly like Will thought he would. Instead it's Lucas who bursts out:

"No, you're not! You're *dating each other* ! That's literally the opposite of just bros!"

"But I thought-" starts Eleven, before Mike, who's been uncharacteristically quiet this whole time, interrupts.

"Hey guys, we're not gonna be able to finish the session if we don't start it soon." At that they drop their bickering and settle in for the game of D&D.

As it turns out, they *don't* have enough time to finish the session, and as the Party shuffles out the door at ten pm they're still grumbling about how it had ended on a huge cliff hanger and they *needed* to know why the honorable Prince of Eldymore had been sneaking into the vaults of Parrilleera. After the last of the Party mutters their way out the door, it's just Mike and Will left in his kitchen. Now Mike turns his full attention to him.

"Sleepover!" he grins and Will can't help but smile back. It's not at all unusual for him to stay over for a sleepover after everyone's left, so why is his stomach doing this stupid fluttery-nervous thing as he follows Mike downstairs? He has a guess, but he's trying not to think about that right now.

By the time they've stuffed themselves with their fill of popcorn and tired themselves out with the Atari, it's already past one in the morning. Will tries and fails to stifle a yawn.

"Getting tired, Will?"

"No," says Will through another yawn. He blushes. "A little."

"Me too," says Mike, tossing him his sleeping bag. "Here, you can take the couch."

"Thanks," he answers, too sleepy to argue for politeness' sake. He rolls out his sleeping bag on the couch as Mike does the same on the floor beside it. After they settle in, Mike turns to him.

"I'm glad we did this," he says. "We haven't had a sleepover in so long." They're both quiet for a minute, each thinking of the last disastrous sleepover they did have. The rain. The failed D&D game. *It's not my fault you don't like girls*. The words ring in both of their ears, but they don't mention it. Instead Mike says softly, "I've missed you."

"Missed you too," he says truthfully. It's probably not normal for teen guys to say stuff like that to each other, thinks Will vaguely. Maybe they're not normal. Then he shakes the thought from his head. Mike is perfectly normal. It's him who isn't.

"I know I sort of..." he struggles then sighs. "I know I ditched you for a while to hangout with El. And we really never talked about it, but I just wanted to say sorry. I was a shitty friend and I wasn't there for you."

"Well..." starts Will. He doesn't know what to say to that. He doesn't know how to explain that each and every time Mike had ditched him for El that summer, it had felt like a punch in the gut. He doesn't know how to explain that he had thought he was losing Mike for good and he doesn't know how to explain how much that had hurt him and why. So he just says, "Well you're here now."

"Yeah. I am." He takes a deep breath. "Actually I'll probably be around a lot more now because... because, uh, El and I broke up. Like yesterday."

"Oh." He's quiet for a minute before he realizes that this is not the time to stare in shock and he needs to comfort his best friend. "Oh. I'm so sorry, Mike. That... that really sucks."

"Thanks." He gives a small smile. "It's okay though. I'm not sad about it. It was a mutual thing." Will must look dubious, because he adds, "It really was!"

"Okay. So... what happened?" he asks gingerly and Mike sighs.

"It's sort of complicated. In the end, it was a lot of different stuff. Like, for one thing I felt guilty that I sort of sprung a romantic relationship on her before she even knew what that *meant* . But mostly... I think we just figured out that we're not in love like that."

"Like 'that'?"

"I mean, I love her. I do, Will. A lot. And she loves me. It just took us awhile to figure out that it's platonic love. We both decided that we're meant to be friends."

"Oh," he says softly. "So what El said earlier... I mean you really are—"

"Just bros. Yeah." He sighs. They're quiet for a long minute and Will can feel sleep pulling at his drooping eyelids.

"Well goodnight, Mike," he finally says softly.

"Night, Will."

As he drifts off, his thoughts become a sleepy haze. Half-dozing, his mind lingers on all the things he doesn't allow himself to think about when he's awake. He thinks of soft hands with long fingers. Of freckles dancing across a nose. Of thick black hair and of soft curls. Of the boy sleeping beside him. And of how goddamn much he loves him.

Notes for the Chapter:

Thanks for reading! I forgot to mention this last chapter, but this takes place directly after the events of season 3. Everything is the same, except Will doesn't move away. Also, Hopper isn't dead. That's not relevant or anything, his death just makes me sad and since I am the god of this silly little story I say he's alive lol

Thank you to everyone who read and commented on the first chapter!! It means a lot to me. Let me know

what you think of this chapter too! Favourite parts?
Predictions? Suggestions? I'd love to hear any of your
thoughts :-)

3. love's strange

Summary for the Chapter:

“Would you rather... make out with a toothless Demogorgon...” she pauses and grins at him devilishly, “...Or Mike Wheeler?” Will feels his cheeks warm. She knows. Of course she knows.

OR

Will finally admits out loud to Robin that he has feelings for Mike, then proceeds to just generally be a gay disaster.

“Okay, I’ve got a good one! Would you rather...” starts Robin. They’re lying on Will’s bed, dangling their legs off the edge and nodding their heads along to The Who, which blaring from his record player.

“Well? I thought you said you had a good one!” laughs Will.

“I do! I’m thinking,” she answers. “Okay, okay I got it: would you rather listen to nothing but Rick Astley’s *Never Gonna Give You Up* for the rest of your life-”

“No!” moans Will.

“Or would you rather listen to whatever songs you want, except it cuts off after the first thirty seconds?”

“Definitely the second one!”

“Yeah you’re right, that was too easy,” laughs Robin. “Fine, you do one.”

“Okay. Would you rather... never be able to speak again or always have to say everything you think out loud?” he says. Robin places a finger on her chin as if deep in thought.

"Hmm... the second one, I think. I mean, I basically do that anyway," she grins and he laughs.

"Really though? I'd definitely choose to never speak again."

"We are very different people, my boy." That cracks them both up because they know it's true. It doesn't seem to matter.

"It's your turn," he reminds her when they quiet down.

"Okay. Would you rather... make out with a toothless Demogorgon..." she pauses and grins at him devilishly, "...Or Mike Wheeler?" Will feels his cheeks warm. She knows. Of course she knows.

"Not fair, Robin! Mike's... my friend," he says lamely. "Don't be *weird*."

"What?" she says innocently. "It's just a question. Come on, there's a gun to your head and you either have to make out with Mike or a toothless Demogorgon. What do you choose?"

"The gun," he deadpans.

"Come on, Will," she badgers. She's not letting him off the hook this time. "Just answer the question."

"*Fine*," he glares at her. "If I *had* to choose between Mike and a Demogorgon, I *guess* that *maybe* I would *probably* ... pick Mike."

"Pick Mike for *what*, Will?" she says diabolically. She wants to make him say it.

"To kiss, Robin. Are you happy?" he snaps. Then quietly, "I would kiss Mike." Robin looks triumphant.

"You totally have a crush on him!"

"Shut up," he mutters, his cheeks a shade of red deeper than he thought humanly possible. "And keep your voice down, Jonathan's home." Robin rolls her eyes, but drops her voice to a whisper anyway.

"And you're not even denying it! Oh my god Will, you've got it baaaaaad," she singsongs. Will attempts to suffocate himself with his pillow.

"Shut up, Robin," comes the muffled reply.

"Oh come on, I tease because I love." She pries the cushion away from his face. When she speaks again, it's with a softer voice. "So you really do like him?" Will debates not answering. He also debates changing his name and moving to Nepal. But she's looking over at him with that uniquely Robin expression that is simultaneously antagonistic and compassionate, so he slowly nods instead.

"You knew?"

"Kind of. I mean, it's pretty obvious," she says and panic swells in his chest.

"It is?" he demands, eyes wide with alarm. "Do you think he knows?"

"Mike? No way. No offense to you and your taste in men, but that boy is oblivious as fuck." He breathes a sigh of relief. Thank God for oblivious boys. "So... Mike Wheeler, huh? I guess you're really into, like, gangly limbs and poofy bowl cuts?"

"He doesn't have a bowl cut anymore..." argues Will half-heartedly. Neither of them did, actually. Will had gotten his cut short while Mike had let his grow out into a nest of curls that Will found positively charming.

"And *gutsy* move trying to steal the freaky power chick's man, by the way."

"I'm not trying to steal El's man," says Will, rolling his eyes. "And they broke up anyway."

"Oh yeah? That means you have a shot!" He has to laugh at that.

"A shot? What am I going to do, Robin? Go up to him like: 'Hello my best friend of ten years who almost definitely only likes girls. Would you like to go out with me? Also I'm gay and in love with you. Bye!'...Cause *that* would go over well." A minute after he finishes

talking, he realizes what he just said. The words he used. *In love* . He braces himself for Robin's inevitable ridicule, but she either doesn't notice or senses that he's pretty damn close to dying of mortification already, because she just says:

"You never know, dude, you never know."

"I'm pretty sure we *do* know." He sighs. "There's no way this ends well."

"Hmm," acknowledges Robin. She doesn't want to tell him that he's probably right. She knows from experience. And like he's reading her mind, he asks:

"What happened with you and the girl you like, anyway? Tammy?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"Nothing," she confirms, then sighs. "Well I guess not *nothing* . We're friends. We play in band together and hang out afterwards sometimes. And I *love* hanging out with her, I really do. I love making her laugh and I love talking to her about sheet music or history tests or nail polish or anything. Because she's funny and smart and fun to be around. But it also just *hurts* to be with her sometimes. It always just reminds me that... that she's never gonna look at me the way I want her to. And there's nothing I can do about it." She sighs and they both fall quiet. They sit in silence for a few minutes, each lost in their own gloomy thoughts.

"Oh my god!" shouts Robin suddenly, as she bolts up on the bed.

"What?" says Will, a little alarmed. "What's wrong?"

"Your brother is dating Nancy Wheeler, right?"

"...Yes?"

"And you like Mike Wheeler?"

“We just established this, yes.”

“So if...” she starts before she breaks off laughing. “So if Jonathan and Nancy got married... and you and Mike got married... you’d be husbands *and* brothers-in-law,” she finishes, still giggling.

“Ew!” says Will before he starts laughing too.

“Is it even *legal* to marry your brother-in-law?” she wonders out loud through giggles.

“I have no idea. But it would *definitely* be weird,” he manages before dissolving back into giggles. Soon they’re both in stitches and wiping hysterical tears from their crinkled eyes. It isn’t even that funny, but it seems like they both needed a laugh. Neither of them mentions the fact that it wouldn’t be legal for him to marry Mike anyway, regardless of brother-in-law status.

* * *

Having finally admitted it out loud, Will is finding it harder and harder to ignore his feelings for Mike. Before, his ill-advised crush had been just another thing he tried not to think about. He was good at not thinking about things. It was something that he kept at the edges of his mind and never looked at. Sure, it would be dragged to the forefront of his thoughts sometimes. Like when Mike would laugh at one of his stupid jokes or brush his hand against Will’s accidentally. But Will had always been quick to beat those pesky feelings down as soon as they appeared. Seriously, it was like emotional Whac-A-Mole. Now though, after Robin cornered him into saying it out loud, it’s like he just couldn’t push it down anymore.

Everything reminds him of Mike and the dumb, squishy feelings he has for him. Looking around his own room is a fucking minefield. Look, there’s the walkie-talkie he’s spent countless hours talking with him on. There’s his calculator watch, the twin of the one Mike wears.

There's the jacket he left last time he came over. God, it even smells like him.

And being around him is even worse. They're still best friends, which means they hangout, alone or with the party, at least five times a week. Will, even if he's quiet, is usually able to at least make intelligent conversation when he tries. Not anymore. Now he's a bushing mess whenever Mike talks to him or comes near to him, even. He finds himself stuttering over simple sentences and rambling unintelligibly. God, this is torture. *Get it together*, thinks Will to himself. *There's no way he's not going to notice something's up*. In the end, he's not entirely right. Mike may not notice any difference, but someone does.

"Huh?" says Will weakly.

"I said: what's your action?" repeats Mike patiently. They're in his basement for another D&D session. Something about pirates and cyclopes. Will's not exactly sure, he hasn't been entirely paying attention.

"Uh..." he fumbles. Shit, what's happening in the game again? Mike is looking at him expectantly. Suddenly Mike's brown eyes on his are too much and he looks at the ground. "I... cast fireball?" Usually a safe bet.

"You cast fireball?" frowns Mike.

"What the fuck, Will?" bursts out Max. "She was helping us!" Oh. Oops. He doesn't even know who "she" is. Maybe he should have tried focusing a little less on the melodic sound of Mike's newly-deep voice and a little more on the words he had actually been saying.

"Maybe she's... a spy?" he ventures.

"She's five years old, Will!" cuts in Dustin. "What kind of orphaned half-elf toddler is a spy?"

"...They recruit young these days," manages Will. Mike's still staring at him and he feels the hairs on the back of his neck rise. He wishes it

was because he sensed the shadow monster or something, but nope; he's just a gay mess. And he's just tried to murder a five year old orphan girl, apparently.

Thankfully, the game wraps up soon (but not before Mike, who had refused to let Will withdraw his action, described the little half-elf's death in excruciating and disturbing detail). As he rushes to pack up his stuff, Will feels a hand at his shoulder. He thinks he might actually die if it's Mike, so he's relieved when he turns to see El. His relief doesn't last long, however, as she looks him in the eye and says:

"Something is going on with you. Why are you being so weird around Mike?"

Notes for the Chapter:

written by your local gay disaster (that's me!) <3

Thanks so much for reading! Please let me know what you think in the comments, I love reading them :-)

4. will you call my name?

Summary for the Chapter:

“What’s... ‘gay’?” she asks.

Okay, this is not the discussion he prepared for. And it’s 19-fucking-85. Has no one ever explained gay people to Eleven?

OR

Will has a conversation with El about why he’s been acting so weird around Mike. And some things start to make sense.

When Will first met Eleven, he had thought she was psychic. I mean, she was definitely telekinetic and to him, telepathy didn’t seem like that far of a stretch. He was quickly assured that no, she was not in any way telepathic. Will was actually far more comfortable with her being able to throw him across the room with a flick of her wrist, rather than being able to read his mind. But sometimes, even now, there are moments that make him wonder if she really *can* hear his thoughts. Right now, for instance, as she stares him in the eyes and asks him why he’s being weird around Mike.

“What?” he manages weakly. “Nothing! I’m not being weird. *You’re* being weird. Who’s Mike?” Smooth. El just stares at him and he knows what’s coming next.

“Will,” she says sternly, “friends don’t lie.” Her single favourite phrase.

“I’m not...” he starts, but he can’t lie to her stern yet soft face. She wouldn’t believe him anyway. Because she’s *psychic*. Or just observant. It’s unclear. Either way, she takes approximately zero bullshit.

“Will,” she says unbendingly. “Friends. Don’t. Lie.” He opens his

mouth to answer, but just then Mike is back at the table, packing up his papers. Will snaps his mouth shut so fast it makes a loud click, which earns him a confused look from Mike. And his cheeks are warm again. Of course. When Mike finally moves away, Will whispers to El:

“Look, we can talk. But not here, okay? Not right now.” She looks like she wants to argue, but she must see the panic in his eyes because she just nods.

“Come to the cabin. Tomorrow.” It’s not a question.

Needless to say, Will does not get a lot of sleep that night. For hours he runs through different ways his conversation with El could go. He could lie. But maybe then she’d sense it and snap his neck with her powers in a blind rage. He could tell the truth. But maybe then she’d get jealous and snap his neck with her powers in a blind rage. In every scenario he runs through, there’s a lot of blind rage and neck snapping. Maybe he’s being dramatic. The worst actually plausible thing that she might do is probably just telling Mike. Which is so much worse!

In the morning he drags himself yawning and bleary-eyed out of bed. He brushes his teeth, combs his hair, and tries to make it look like he didn’t say up all night dreading today. He looks through his closet for an outfit that says: “Please don’t beat me up with your powers even though I’m totally crushing on your newly-ex boyfriend”. He can’t find one, so he just pulls on a striped polo. Good enough.

By eight o’clock, he has already dressed, showered, and eaten. God, he just wants to get this over with. But El had said to come over after Hopper leaves for work, which won’t be until at least ten thirty five (one zero three five, she’d told him). He spends the rest of the morning tapping his foot, drumming his fingers, and glancing at the clock every five seconds. At ten fifteen he decides that’s late enough

and flings himself out the door and onto his bike.

After a few minutes of furious peddling, he finds himself standing in front of the cabin, feeling the first few drops of summer rain on his cheeks. The truck's already gone, so Hopper must have gotten to work early today. Well, early for him. He makes his way to the door, careful not to trigger any of the trip wires. He's about to knock on the door when it suddenly swings open. El waves him in from where she's sitting on the couch then wipes her nose on her sleeve. Jesus, he'll never get used to being friends with a literal super hero. He steps into the cottage and closes the door behind him.

"Hey, El. Uh, how are you?" he asks, hoping to delay the inevitable with a little small talk. Unfortunately for him, Eleven doesn't *do* small talk.

"Will," she nods, and pats the couch beside her. As soon as he sits down she says, "So?"

"...So?" he says like he has no idea what she's talking about.

"So , what is going on with you?"

"Um, not too much... what's been going on with you?" he tries.

"Will." She sounds frustrated. Honestly, Will's kind of frustrated with himself too. Why *can't* he just tell her the truth? They're friends, right?

"Nothing, El. I'm okay. I've just been... thinking a lot." Sort of true. He just doesn't mention that all his thoughts have to do with dark curls and a freckle spattered nose. But like a goddamn mind reader (are we *sure* she isn't psychic?), she says:

"About Mike?"

"Uh... no?" *Wow super convincing* , he thinks to himself. *Great job, Will.*

"Are you and Mike fighting again?" she asks, drawing her eyebrows

together.

“No. We aren’t... fighting.”

“Is Mike being stupid again?” she asks, sounding like someone very familiar with Mike’s stupidity.

“No, no he didn’t do anything wrong...” trails off Will.

“Are *you* being stupid?”

“No... well yes, but I didn’t do anything...”

“Then *what* , Will?” she says, losing patience.

“Well... I guess that... I sort of...” he starts. Holy shit, is he really going to say it? He thinks he might.

“Well?” demands El. He takes a deep breath. He thinks he really might say it. Here he goes.

“ *IguessthatIsortoflikeMike,*” he blurts out, quiet and fast enough that he half-hopes she didn’t hear. But maybe super hearing is one of her abilities, because she answers:

“Yes, I know. Mike is your friend.”

“No, well yes, he is. But that’s not what I mean.” El tilts her head and looks at him expectantly. He sighs and continues, “Like... I like him in the same way... that Lucas likes Max.” El takes a minute to process.

“But Lucas and Max are dating.” Will just nods once and blushes, so she continues. “And you and Mike are both boys. And boys... don’t date each other.”

“Some do,” he says quietly, without looking up from where he’s picking at the couch stitching.

“Really?” she says. But doesn’t sound disgusted. If anything, she sounds curious.

“Yeah, uh... gay boys do,” Will continues tentatively.

“What’s... ‘gay’?” she asks. Okay, this is not the discussion he prepared for. And it’s 19-fucking-85. Has no one ever explained gay people to Eleven?

“Well, uh, it’s when a boy wants to, uh, kiss other boys. Or when a girl wants to kiss other girls,” he answers carefully. El is quiet for a very long minute. The only things Will can hear is the rain pounding against the windows and his own heart beating wildly in his ears.

“And this ‘gay’... it isn’t... normal?” she asks, and Will’s heart sinks in his chest. *Not normal. Weirdo. Freak*, his brain tells him. *Shut the fuck up*, he tells his brain.

“Well... it sort of is normal. I mean, it isn’t wrong or anything. No matter what anyone says,” he explains slowly. “But no, it’s not... common.” El is quiet for another long minute and Will thinks vaguely that he should get in reach of a phone, just in case he has a heart attack and needs to call an ambulance. It’s seeming like a distinct possibility.

“But I thought... everyone was like that...?” she says slowly after a moment.

“What?”

“I thought that... all girls wanted to kiss other girls?” Huh? ...Oh! Oh *shit!*

“El... do *you* want to kiss other girls?”

“...Yes?” she answers uncertainly. Then she thinks for a minute. Of copper hair and warm smiles, of freckles and bright laughter. “Yes,” she says again, this time more confident.

“Oh!” This was *definitely* not the discussion he had been expecting. “But I thought... because of Mike...”

“What about Mike?” she asks, confused.

“Well, because you dated him, I guess I assumed you liked boys.”

“Don’t I like boys?”

“Well *I* don’t know! Do you?”

“ *I* don’t know!”

“How do you *not know* if you like boys?”

“I just assumed I did! I’ve never really thought about it!” They look at each other in utter confusion for a few seconds. Then they both dissolve into hysterical laughter.

“So... so... ” starts Will, still laughing. “So you’ve just never thought about it?”

“I guess not?” she giggles. They take another minute to get their laughter under control. Still catching his breath, but more serious now, Will says:

“Maybe you’re like David Bowie or Freddie Mercury,” he offers. When El just stares at him blankly he explains, “They’re famous musicians. And they like both men *and* women.”

“You can do that?”

“I guess so. I think it’s called bisexual. ”

“Hmm. Bye-sex-oo-al,” she says, trying out the new word.

“Do you think you might be like that?”

“I don’t know,” she says, thinking about it. “I think... I like girls, at least.” She says it like she has one particular girl in mind, but Will doesn’t ask. “I don’t know about boys. I mean, I’ve only ever kissed Mike. And in the end, it felt like we were-”

“Just bros? Yeah he told me.” She nods.

“So I don’t really know how to tell,” she concludes. Turning to him, she asks, “What about you? Do you like boys and girls?”

“Just boys,” he answers.

"You don't like *girls* ?" El asks, seeming absolutely confounded at the idea of *anyone* not loving women.

"I don't think so... "

"Have you ever kissed a girl?"

"No."

"So how do you know you wouldn't like kissing one?"

"I just don't..." he starts. It's hard to explain to her that the idea of kissing a girl, of falling in love with a girl, has always just seemed so alien to him. That when he tries to imagine that future, the one where he meets a woman and falls in love and gets married, he just... can't. It seems like a life for somebody else. So he just sighs and says, "I don't know. I guess maybe I can't know *for sure* for sure."

"Hmm. Like how I don't know if *I* like kissing boys because I've only ever kissed Mike."

"I guess so."

"Hmm," she says again, before a determined look crosses her face. Will is about to ask her what she's thinking about when suddenly she's leaning forward and pressing her lips against his.

* * *

A few days ago, Robin and Will had been out walking in the woods around his house. It was a bright summer day and the sun kissed their cheeks through holes in the canopy above.

"Dude," said Robin as she balanced on a log, "I can't believe you haven't brought me here before!"

"I'm bringing you here now," answered Will as he ducked beneath a low branch.

"But this is literally the most gorgeous thing I'd ever seen! You were

withholding it from me!”

“Yesterday you said our waitress was the most gorgeous thing you’d ever seen,” he countered. But honestly, he couldn’t help but admire the scene himself. It was another one of his hideouts, this one a little babbling stream with a teeny tiny waterfall. It was even complete with a rock that was perfect for sitting on and drawing. He was proud of this little slice of nature he’d stumbled upon, and he usually kept it to himself. He’d only shown it to three people in his whole life: Jonathon, Mike, and now Robin. And her excitement had made it well worth showing her.

She walked over and plopped herself down beside him on the rock he’d stretched out on. They sat there quietly for a long time, basking in the summer warmth. It was a comfortable sort of silence, the kind that only comes from being alone with someone who really understands you. They didn’t always need words. Right now, they just needed the sun, and the trees, and their friend beside them.

“Have you ever kissed anyone?” asked Will sleepily after awhile. He had almost been drowsing and his sudden question surprised both of them.

“Yeah,” answered Robin, lolling her head to the side to face him.

“A girl?”

“Yeah,” she said, sounding a little proud.

“What’s it like?” he finally asked. He’d been wondering for a while.

“Kissing?”

“Yeah. But, I mean, when it’s *right* .”

“Hmm,” she said, giving it some thought. “Well, Steve will try to tell you that it should feel like electricity, or like lightning or something, but Steve is also full of shit.”

“It’s not like that?”

"I dunno. Maybe for him. But not for me. For me it's more like..." she struggled to find something to compare it to. "Oh okay, I got it. Do you know the senior hallway at school? The one with all the benches and windows?" Will nodded. "Okay, and you know how when you walk through that hallway, even in the winter, you can feel the sun on your skin when you pass the windows? And it feels so warm and pure and golden on your face. And you feel like you want to live in that warmth forever and ever. You know that feeling?" Will nodded again, hanging on to her every word. "For me kissing is like that, when it's with the right person. Except the warmth isn't coming from the outside. It's like that golden light starts here," she taps over her heart, "and spreads all over you from the inside out. It's like holding the sun in your chest." *Like holding the sun in your chest*, thought Will. *How beautiful is that*.

* * *

This does not feel like holding the sun in his chest. This does not feel like a crackle of electricity before a storm. This just feels like chapped lips pressed against his.

It surprised him at first, but eventually he leaned forward to test the kiss. Now he's kissing her back and feeling her lips sliding clumsily over his. It feels warm and soft and a little wet. He doesn't hate it. It doesn't feel terrible. But it doesn't feel right, either. They separate after a few seconds and look at each other.

"El, I didn't... feel-"

"Yeah, me neither," she says. In that moment, some puzzle pieces fall into place for both of them and they share a little smile.

"What. The actual. Fuck," comes another voice, making them both jump and spring apart. They turn to see Mike Wheeler, eyes wide and mouth open, standing in the cabin's doorway. Then just as suddenly

as he appeared, he's turning around, slamming the door, and running out into the rain.

"Mike," manages El, glancing worriedly at Will. "What should we..." she starts, but he's already off the couch and running to the door. He flings it open and shouts into the downpour:

"Mike! Wait! I can explain! Mike!" He keeps calling his name as he steps out after him into the rain.

"Mike!"

Notes for the Chapter:

Hey y'all! Hope you liked it! Also, we're gonna be cranking up the angst-o-meter here for a little bit, but not too much I promise.

Anyway, thanks so much for reading! I'd love to hear your thoughts :-)

5. inside and out

Summary for the Chapter:

As Will runs after Mike, he sees their friendship flash before his eyes.

“Mike, wait!”

As Will scrambles over the rain slick ground, trying to reach Mike before he can ride away, his mind is doing some scrambling of its own. How can he *possibly* fix this? And how did he even fuck things up so bad? He tries to imagine the scene Mike has just walked in on from his point of view: his best friend and his *very newly* ex-girlfriend, who is also his other best friend, kissing and looking at each other tenderly. Fuck fuck fuck Mike’s gonna hate him forever!

“Please, Mike!” he calls again, a little desperately. Mike has almost reached his bike. If he rides away and Will doesn’t get a chance to explain... that could be it for them. And Will doesn’t even want to think about what his life would be like without Mike Wheeler in it.

* * *

It’s the first day of kindergarten and a boy is sitting by himself on the swing set. He’s shuffling his feet back and forth in the sand and trying very hard not to cry. School is new and loud and scary and he’s starting to think that maybe he’d like to go home now. All the other kids here seem to know each other somehow, but not him. He’s all alone.

“Do you want to be my friend?” he hears a small, bright voice say. He doesn’t look up. They must be talking to some other kid. Someone worth being friends with. “Do you want to be my friend?” comes the voice, a little louder. This time, the boy shyly raises his eyes to the

speaker. It's a boy that he recognizes from his class, but who's name he can't quite remember. He has black hair and a nice smile.

"...Me?" he asks uncertainly. Could this boy really be talking to *him* ?

"Yes," comes the squeaky answer.

"...Okay," he tells him, after thinking it over for a minute. He could use a friend and this new boy looks nice. Even more important than that: he's alone too.

"Okay?" He almost looks surprised.

"Yeah," nods the boy on the swing set. "I'll be your friend." Then he remembers what his mom taught him about meeting new people and being polite, so he stands up and offers his hand. "My name is Will." The boy takes his hand in his and they shake, both feeling pretty grown-up.

"My name's Mike," he tells him with a smile. And then Will isn't alone anymore. Neither of them are.

* * *

They're seven years old and lying on the floor in Mike's bedroom. The carpet is covered with crayons and sheets of paper and both boys are scribbling furiously.

"Look at this one! Look at this one!" shouts Mike. "It's a dragon!" he proclaims, holding up a drawing he's just made that looks very little like a dragon.

"Woah, nice!" Will says sincerely. With his own drawings, Will takes a slightly different approach than Mike's quantity-over-quality speed doodling. He's been working on the same picture for half an hour now and Mike can't understand what's taking so long.

"Can I see it yet?" he whines.

"Not yet," he answers, moving to hide his paper from Mike. "You can

see once it's finished."

"But you've been working on it for like a thousand years!" he proclaims. Will checks the watch he got for Christmas.

"Thirty minutes, actually." Mike looks bewildered. In his little kid brain, a millennium and a half hour were practically synonymous.

It takes fifteen more minutes before Will finally consents to sharing his finished picture with Mike.

"Okay... I guess you can see it now."

"Really?" Mike says, jumping up from where he flopped down on the bed after growing tired of his own drawings. "Let's see!"

"Okay..." he says, with more than his usual shyness. Reluctantly, he holds up the paper for Mike to see. "You see, it's-"

"Us!" he exclaims excitedly. "Will, that's us, right?"

"Yeah!" The drawing is of the two of them standing outside together under a yellow sun. For a seven year old armed with nothing but crayons, it isn't half bad.

"It looks just like us! Woah you're like... Leonard Devinsy or something!" Will isn't sure who that is (Mike isn't actually all that sure either), but it sounds like a compliment. His face brightens with a smile.

"You really think so?"

"Totally! Here," he points, "that looks exactly like me!" Will flushes a little. He'd spent a lot more time drawing Mike than he had on himself. He isn't sure why it seemed so important to get his friend just right in the drawing, but it did. Maybe this was why: just to see Mike smile at something he'd made.

"Here, you keep it. It's for you," he says. And Mike looks like he's just won the lottery.

“Really? Thanks, Will! I love it!” The boy pulls his friend into a quick hug. They’ve never really hugged before, but Mike can’t think of any other way to thank him (he’d give him one of his own drawings, but despite all of Will’s compliments he’s pretty sure they’re what Nancy would, out of earshot of their parents, call “crap”). “Thank you!” he says again.

“Yeah, no problem,” squeaks a blushing Will.

By the time Joyce comes to pick him up that evening, Will’s fingers are stiff from drawing and his cheeks are sore from smiling (they always are, around Mike).

* * *

Mike and Will, age nine, are running for their lives through the school yard. Well maybe not for their *lives* but at least for their dignity.

“Come on, Mike!” urges Will. “We can’t slow down!” Mike nods breathlessly and picks up the pace again. They both know what fate awaits them if Troy and his goons catch up to them: swirly central. And call them crazy, but they aren’t exactly thrilled at the prospect of having their heads shoved down the toilet.

“Shit! Will, do you see them?” he yells, looking over his shoulder (“Shit” isn’t a word he’s strictly *allowed* to say, but desperate times call for strong language).

“I can’t see them!” he yells back, searching the crowd in the school yard without slowing his pace. “That’s good, right?”

“If you were in a field with a lion and suddenly you couldn’t see it, would you be relieved?” he asks through heavy breaths. “Don’t stop running.” Will nods. He trusts Mike with this. He’s managed to keep them both safe and swirly free thus far.

They sprint to the far edge of the yard, the one near the school. Will is the third fastest runner in fourth grade, and Mike isn't too slow himself, but they're both losing speed now. Will's not sure how much longer they can keep this up, and Troy's gang could be anywhere.

"Wait," shouts Mike as he pulls him by the arm. "In here!" Will finds himself being dragged through the open library door. He's never been in here without his class before, and didn't even know it was open during recess. As they step hurriedly into the cool of the building, he sees a few older kids reading at tables, but thankfully no Troy.

"Are we safe in here, do you think?" pants Will.

"Are you kidding? I don't think Troy and his goons even know where the library is!" He gives a sly little smile that Will quickly returns.

"I don't think they know how to *read*." That cracks them up. Their laughter is quiet, both because they're out of breath and because they're in a library, but it's a relief all the same. They're safe.

Deciding to wait the bullies out in here, they find a nice quiet corner to hunker down in. Will looks around at the little section they settled on for any books that might help the time pass. "Instructional Manuals and Handbooks" reads the hand lettered sign for the section. It's all woodworking manuals and bird-identification books. Rats, could they have picked a more boring section to hide out in? He's about to say something to this effect to Mike when something catches his eye.

"Dungeons and Dragons?" he reads aloud.

"Huh?" Will pulls the book from the shelf and shows it to Mike. On the cover is a drawing of a wizard with a long white beard, battling what seem to be gargoyles. It looks... magical. "Woah. What is it?"

"I dunno," answers Will. "It looks like... some sort of game?"

They spend the next half hour devouring page after page of this

magical book. They read about elves and giants, about goblins and gnomes. They read the forces of good, inevitably triumphing over those of evil.

They both fall a little bit in love with this book. Well, Mike falls in love with the book. Will falls in love with Mike's face as he reads it.

* * *

The Wheeler's basement is bright with laughter tonight. Four boys are crowded around the game table, waiting with bated breath to see what the die will land on.

"An eighteen!" erupts Lucas. "You hit it! We hit it!"

"You hit it!" confirms Mike. "Will, roll for the damage dealt." Will shakes two six sided dice in his hands and releases them onto the table.

"Please please please," he mutters as they roll across the table top. "Nine!"

"Yes! Come on, it's gotta be dead, right Mike?"

"It has to be! Mike, if it isn't dead-"

"The beast is..." starts Mike dramatically and a hush falls over the room. "...Dead!" Shouts of victory and congratulations from everyone. "The blow struck it directly in the side! It staggers, staggers, staggers, and falls! It gives one last piercing shriek," he pauses to demonstrate, "and then closes its eyes forever!" More triumphant shouts and smiles.

They're only eleven years old; old enough to feel adolescence and adulthood lurking on the horizon, but young enough not to really care. That's ages away. For now, they're sitting around the gametable

with their friends, killing monsters in a fantastical land and laughing together.

Will's gaze catches Mike's as they grin at each other. Yeah, they have plenty of time left to be kids.

* * *

They're twelve years old and sitting in a dark hospital room. After many hugs and tears and smiles, everyone has finally left for the day. Even Joyce was eventually convinced to go home for a shower and a nap so long as it was understood that she'd "be right back, my sweet boy, swear to God". Only Mike didn't leave. Claimed he wasn't tired and flat out refused to go. He eventually convinced the Wheelers to go home without him, so now he and Will are alone in Will's small, antiseptic smelling room.

Mike, for all his claims that he "wasn't even tired", is dozing soundly in the chair beside the hospital bed. Will, on his part, is finding sleep absolutely impossible. If asked about his sudden complete inability to fall asleep, he'd claim that he was still too wired from the excitement and fear of the day. But privately, he suspects that it has something more to do with the fact that before drifting off, Mike had taken his hand in his own. Their hands are still linked now, as he dozes. And Will wouldn't let go to save his life.

As much as he tries not to, his mind keeps replaying scenes from that other place. Mike told him they called it "the Upside Down" and Will understood why. Everything about that place was wrong. And now his brain seems half-stuck there, reliving every moment of fear and anguish on an endless loop. So Will tries to fill his head with other thoughts to crowd out those dark, cold memories. He focuses on the warm fingers interlaced with his. He thinks about the boy they're

attached to. About how brave he's been. About how he's never given up on Will, not once. About how peaceful he looks when he sleeps. About how as long as he's in his life, Will will be okay. He'll be okay.

* * *

They're fourteen years old and they're running through the rain. One boy is calling after the other.

"Mike! Mike, wait!"

He doesn't turn around.

Notes for the Chapter:

Hey! I tried something a little different with this chapter. I'd love to hear your thoughts in the comments!

As always, thank you so much for reading! It means a lot to me that people want to read my little story
<3

6. rain keeps falling

Summary for the Chapter:

Will tries to explain to Mike why he was kissing El.

Thunder booms overhead and a cold wind rips through the trees. Will can feel panic swelling in his chest and sobs rising in his throat as he runs after his friend. Mike reaches his bike and is picking it up from where he's dropped it on the ground when Will reaches him and places a hand on his shoulder.

"Mike, please-" he starts, before his hand is slapped away. He tries again, with a shaky voice, "Can we please just talk for a minute?" Mike whips around to face him.

"Talk, Will? About what?" he spits. His face is red and despite the rain, those are undeniably tears in his eyes. Will is taken back for a second. He had been expecting the yelling and the anger, but he wasn't prepared for this... this *hurt* on Mike's face.

"I... I want to explain-"

"Explain? Oh I don't think you need to," he says and his voice cracks. "I think I understand *perfectly*, Will."

"No, Mike, you don't!"

"I just saw you kissing Eleven, Will! What's not to understand!"

"No, I..." He searches for something he can say, something that might be able to undo this. Fuck. He can only think of one thing that really can. And that's telling the truth. He takes a deep breath. "Okay look... do you remember that fight we had earlier this summer? When all that mind-flayer stuff was going on?"

"Are you really bringing that up right now? If this is your petty way of getting back at me-" Will shakes his head and cuts him off.

"Mike, do you remember what you said to me during our fight?" Mike rolls his eyes.

"Will, I already apologized for that. If you-"

"What did you say to me that day?" This earns him another teary eye-roll. "Say it, Mike."

"I said... I said that it wasn't my fault you didn't like girls." He winces at the memory of his own cruel words. But then his anger comes back to him and he raises his voice, "But obviously I was wrong about you not liking girls, wasn't I? You just pretty clearly proved me wrong." He laughs bitterly. Will takes a shaky breath.

"No, you were... right. You were *right*."

"I just saw you making out with my ex-girlfriend, Will! What are you talking about, you don't-"

"Mike," he says meaningfully, staring up at his friend through tears. He doesn't think he can bear it if he has to say it aloud again, so he just waits for Mike to connect the dots on his own. After a minute, he sees his friend's eyes widen in recognition.

"Oh," Mike says, the rage his face had held a minute ago suddenly replaced by surprise. "But Will-" he starts, but just then they hear the sound of tires on gravel and a second later they're both blinded by a pair of headlights.

Hopper steps out of the truck and slams the door. He seems surprised to see the two boys here, standing with their bikes in the middle of a downpour.

"Oh, hey kids. The power went out at the station and I was just coming to check on El. Are you two... coming inside for a visit?"

"We were just leaving," they say in synchrony. Hopper looks down at their bikes dubiously.

"On your bikes? In this?" he gestures to the torrential rain around

them. They nod. “Uh yeah, no. Come in and dry off. We can play a board game or something and wait out the storm.”

“No!” blurts out Mike.

“Uh, we both need to be getting home now, actually,” explains Will. He lifts his own bike from the ground and moves to get on.

“Boys, I might not be the most ‘responsible’ adult you’ve ever met. But I’m not about to let a couple of kids ride miles on their bicycles in the middle of a storm. I’ll drive you home.” They start to protest, but Hopper waves them off. “Not a discussion. Now throw your bikes in the back and hop in while I go say hi to El. I’ll be right back.”

The boys exchange a glance, then do as he says. Once they both climb in and shut the doors behind them, Mike turns back to Will.

“Will-” he starts again, but then Hopper is opening the door and getting in the driver’s seat, so he falls silent. Before driving off, Jim looks between the two boys for a minute. It’s clear that they’ve both been crying and there’s obviously something going on here that he’s missing. But then again, he doesn’t really want to know. So he just silently puts the truck in reverse and backs out of the drive.

The ride home is a tense one, to say the least. The boys seem to be very pointedly *not* talking to each other and Hopper isn’t about to get in the middle of some tween boy melodrama, so no one says a single word the entire drive. He pulls up to the Wheeler’s house first. Mike hops out and gets his bike from the trunk, muttering a sullen “thanks”.

“Sure, kid,” he says, expecting Mike to close the door and walk away. But he doesn’t. Instead he just stands there in the rain like he’s waiting for something. Eventually, he says:

“Well are you coming Will?” The other boy looks up from where he’s been resting his head against the window.

“What?”

“Are you coming?” he says again, gesturing to the house behind him. Will hesitates, unsure, so he adds softly, “Look, I’m not mad, okay? I’m... I’m not mad”. Will pauses a moment longer before nodding and sliding out the door after him.

“Oh, uh, thanks Hopper.”

“Yeah, no problem,” he answers as he watches the boys stumble to the house. Huh. Well something is definitely going on with those two, contemplates Jim as he shifts into drive. Whatever, teen boys fight. He’s sure they’ll figure it out eventually.

Will isn’t so sure. He has no idea what to expect as he shuffles into the Wheeler’s front hall. Mike said he wasn’t mad, but that doesn’t mean he isn’t disgusted or offended or any number of other not-so-nice emotions. He tries to search his face for any indication of how he’s feeling, but Mike’s expression is closed off and unreadable.

“Come on,” he says simply and leads Will to his room. Mike offers him some dry clothes, before taking some himself to go change in the bathroom. As soon as he leaves, Will gets dressed as fast as he can in the fresh clothes, then tries to focus on calming the fuck down. He sits on the bed and tries to get his breathing under control. He can hear his mom’s voice in his head: Deep breath in, deep breath out. Deep breath in, deep breath out. You know, Will always imagined coming out of the closet as a singular event. A one time only, single, life-changing moment. No one ever told him that he’d have to come out over and over again. This is the third time so far, and second time today. And he hates that he’s this terrified. He hates that it’s this hard *every time* . And this time is worse, because this is *Mike* . He can’t... he doesn’t know what he’ll do if he loses Mike.

When he comes back, Mike takes a seat beside Will on the bed and politely ignores the fresh tears running down his cheeks.

“So.”

“So...?” asks Will with a tremor in his voice.

“So you don’t, uh, like... girls?” Will can’t meet his eyes.

“Nope.”

“Do you... um, do you like-”

“Boys,” he says, voice barely above a whisper. “Yeah.”

“Oh.” He’s quiet for a minute. He doesn’t look surprised exactly, more like he’s processing. “Then why... I mean earlier...?”

Slowly and shakily, Will starts to explain the events that led up to the scene he walked in on. He presents as true a version of the events as he can, careful to leave out anything about Mike and his feelings for him. He also doesn’t mention anything about El’s realization. That isn’t his place to tell.

“Oh,” says Mike when he’s done. “...So you and El really aren’t together or anything? I mean, you... *she* doesn’t like you like that?”

“Definitely not. She was just being a good friend,” he assures. “And you know I wouldn’t do that to you, right? Even if I was straight, I would never hit on your girlfriend.”

“Ex-girlfriend,” he corrects. “And yeah, I know you wouldn’t.” They’re quiet for a minute, but Will has to ask:

“So you’re not... I mean, you’re okay with me being... gay?” he asks falteringly. Mike blinks.

“Yes?”

“...Yes?” repeats Will.

“Yes, *of course* !” he says, like it’s obvious. “Will, you are my best friend. I don’t give a shit if you want to kiss boys.” Will feels like

crying again. Hearing these words, spoken with so much goddamn love, is almost too much for him. Yet part of him can't help wondering if Mike would say the same thing if he knew which boy specifically Will wanted to kiss. He pushes the thought away.

"Thanks, Mike. You're my best friend too." He tries to smile. It must look pathetic through his tears but Mike smiles back warmly.

They talk about it for a minute longer. Apologies are offered and apologies are accepted. Hugs are received. And they're okay. Maybe a little of the day's awkwardness hangs around them for awhile, but in the end, that's all that matters: that they're okay.

* * *

If it was hard for Will to be in love with his straight best friend *before* said best friend knew he had a crush on a boy, it is now nearly unbearable.

"But *why* can't you tell me who it is?" needles Mike, nudging Will's foot with his. It's a warm August afternoon, a few days after the events of the rainstorm. The two boys are laying on the carpet in Will's room and listening to records as Mike badgers him.

"Shut up, Mike," blushes Will.

"No, really! If El knows who you like, why can't I?"

"Because..." *Because it's you* "Because it's a secret."

"So? I've told you literally every secret I've ever had! I even told you about the time I took a piss in Dustin's cat's litter box!"

"You were eight years old, Micheal! This is in no way a comparable situation!"

“Whatever. But I’ve still always told you who *I* liked!” he whines.

“You’ve liked exactly one person in the past three years,” points out Will.

“Well...”

“Drop it, Mike,” he begs. Mike does not drop it.

“I don’t understand why you won’t tell me!” Then he gasps like he’s just had a realization and Will nearly has a fucking heart attack. “Wait, is it someone in the Party?”

“No!” lies Will. “Of course not! They’re my friends.”

“Lucas and Max are friends,” points out Mike. “And they’re also dating.”

“Look, it’s not someone in the Party, okay?” God, he hopes he isn’t blushing as much as it feels like he is.

“But it *is* someone I know?”

“No?” says Will, but it doesn’t sound convincing even to himself.

“Oh my god, it is!”

“I never said that!”

“Okay who could it be though? Hmm... Oh! Is it Tommy G. from math class?”

“Who?” He thinks for a minute. “You mean the kid with the glasses? We’ve literally never spoken, why would it be him?” Mike shrugs.

“I dunno, he has nice eyes. Oh okay, what about Greg?”

“Greg *McCorkle* ? No way, he isn’t even nice.”

“Fine.” He thinks hard for a minute. “Oh! I got it: Keith,” he says with a cheeky grin.

“Oh my god! Gross, Mike!” He slaps him on the arm. “I’m gay, not

blind. I still have standards!”

“Jeez okay!” he says, putting his hands up. “So it’s a boy that I know, who isn’t in the Party and who isn’t Keith.”

“It is *not* Keith, correct.”

“Hmm... Wait!” He looks at him with an expression that is a mix of shock and awe. Oh god, he’s figured it out, hasn’t he? “Is it...” Will braces himself. “... *Steve* ?”

“Steve?”

“Yeah! He’s our friend and he’s nice and he’s... okay looking. I mean he has that hair. Oh my god, it’s him, isn’t it?” he says with a grin. Will is so caught up in his relief that Mike didn’t figure out the truth that he doesn’t even realize he’s opened his mouth when he hears himself say:

“Yes. You’re right, it is Steve.”

“Oh my god! I knew it! I *knew* it!” shouts Mike. “That’s awesome, Will! He’s a good guy and...” Mike keeps rambling while Will tries to figure out what’s just happened. He just told Mike that had a crush on Steve, didn’t he? Now why *the hell* did he say that? Panic, he guesses. He was so worried that Mike would figure out it was him. Well, that was one problem solved. And a whole shit-ton more created.

Notes for the Chapter:

phew that's it for the angst for a while. Back to gay disasters and silly shenanigans!

Thanks so much for reading! I'd love to hear what you think in the comments <3

7. you know it, baby

Summary for the Chapter:

Mike tries to set Will up with Steve... who's trying to set Will up with Mike.

"I can't believe you're laughing at me right now!" yells Will, burying his head in his arms. "It isn't funny!"

"Okay but it sort of is, though," chokes out Robin. "So now Mike thinks you like..."

"Steve, yeah." That sets her off again.

"So... so..." she giggles. "So the boy you've had a huge crush on for years thinks you've got the hots for... Steve *the Hair* Harrington."

"Yes. Ugh! This isn't fucking funny Robin!" He stares at her seriously for a minute before collapsing into a fit of laughter himself. "...Okay, so maybe it's a little funny."

"Yeah it is," she says through more giggles.

"But it's also a disaster, Robin!"

"How, though?" she asks, calming down a little. "Isn't it a good thing that Mike doesn't know you actually like him?"

"Yeah, that's the good part," concedes Will. "Except now he's actually trying to *set me up* with Steve!"

"Oh my god, is he actually?"

"Yes! Yesterday we were just chatting with the Party when Dustin mentioned Steve's name in passing and Mike - swear to god- *winked* at me!"

"That's too good," wheezes Robin.

"And that's not even the worst of it! He also keeps suggesting we invite Steve to hang out with us and stuff!" He sighs. "Robin, this whole thing seriously sucks. What should I do?"

"...I dunno."

"You don't *know*?" he says incredulously. "But you're Robin! You always know what to do."

"I am a genius, correct. And yeah maybe I can give advice for, like, normal life stuff but this... I mean, I'm not sure that this is a situation anyone has ever been in before, dude."

"What, you don't think it's common to accidentally tell the guy you're secretly in love with that you have a crush on his sister's ex-boyfriend who you kill monsters with sometimes?"

"...I wouldn't say common, no." She thinks about it for a minute, drumming her fingers. "Ok I do have one idea, but I don't think you're gonna like it." His eyes narrow with suspicion.

"What is it?"

"I think we should bring in an expert to help you."

"What do you mean?" he asks distrustfully.

"Well, there's one person I can think of who knows more about being infatuated with Steve Harrington than anyone else..."

"No, Robin, you don't mean-"

"...I think you should tell Steve."

"Absolutely not!"

"But he gives Dustin advice all the time and maybe he'll know what to do about your whole situation! I hear he has his moments of wisdom," she argues. "Plus that man genuinely loves talking about himself! You'd be doing him a favour, really."

"But I don't-" he starts.

“Dude, what are your other options here?” she says. “Plus -and no offense man- but how much more fucked up could your life get?” Well, she has a point there.

Which is how an hour later, he finds himself sitting behind the counter at Family Video with Robin and the former king of Hawkins High himself, explaining everything.

“...So you *don't* have a crush on me?” is the first thing Steve says once he's done explaining.

“ No .”

“Oh, okay.” He's quiet for a minute, still wearing his processing-new-information face. After a while he says slowly, “...Is it my hair? It's the new haircut, isn't it! I *knew* it made me look ugly-”

“Steve,” interjects Robin. “No one's saying you're not a babe, calm down. But maybe we should try and focus a bit more on Will's *actual* crush?” Steve looks at her and blinks.

“Oh yeah, yeah right.” He turns to Will now. “So... Mike Wheeler, huh? Damn, those Wheelers are heartbreakers, aren't they?” The boy nods, not meeting his eyes. “Okay, but I'm not sure I followed the entire story; why exactly did you tell him you liked *me* ?”

“Steve, if I knew that I'd tell you,” answers Will honestly.

“...Okay, whatever. But now Mike is trying to, like, set you up? With me?”

“Yes,” says an exasperated Will. He's forgotten how long it takes to explain things to Steve.

“So he just- Wait doesn't he know I'm too old for you?” he interrupts himself.

“I don't know, Steve! Can we please focus?” he huffs. “What should I do ?”

“Okay, okay, here’s what you gotta do,” starts Steve, becoming serious. “What you’ve got to do is get yourself some Fabergé Organics shampoo and conditioner. After that, you want to get -and if you repeat this do anyone you’re dead- some Farrah Fawcett spray. Now after that-”

“Steve, what the fuck are you talking about?” interjects Will.

“What do you mean?” he asks, looking genuinely confused. “I’m telling you how to style your hair to get Mike’s attention! I’ve only tried it on girls but it probably works on guys too.” Will takes a deep breath in.

“Steve. I’m not looking for grooming tips,” he says slowly. “And I’m not trying to get Mike’s attention. I actually want *less* of his attention on me and my love life.”

“Ohhhhhh,” says Steve. “Wait, now I’m confused again.” Will and Robin groan in unison.

“Robin, I thought you said he could help!” accuses Will.

“What I said was that he has his moments of wisdom. This is evidently not one of those moments.”

“Well I’m sorry for trying to help!” huffs Steve.

“No, you’re right,” sighs Will. “You were trying to help, Steve. I’m sorry about-”

“Shut up!” he says suddenly.

“What?” blinks Will. “But I was just apolog-”

“No seriously, shut up,” repeats Steve, gesturing to the door of the store, where Mike and Lucus have just walked in. Will curses under his breath as he waves his hand to greet them.

“Steve, when they come to the cash don’t be weird okay?” he whispers.

“I’m never weird!”

“Steve I’m serious *don’tbewierd* ,” he hisses before his friends reach the counter, putting an end to their whisper fight.

“Hey, Will! Hey *Steeeeve* ,” says Mike, drawing out the name and looking pointedly at Will with a goofy expression. Will can already feel his cheeks growing warm.

“Hey guys!” he chokes out. “Uh, what’s up?”

“We were looking for you, actually,” explains Lucas. “It seems like you’re always hanging around here lately.” Here, Mike raises his eyebrows at Will as if to say *I wonder why* . If only he knew.

“Oh, ha, right.” He clears his throat. “So, uh, what did you want...?”

“Right,” says Mike. “We were coming to see if you want to play D&D tonight.” Okay so that’s suspicious. They play D&D together almost every night and he never gets an in-person invitation. They usually just call or use the walkie-talkies.

“Yeah... sure,” says Will tentatively.

“Good, good,” says Mike. “I planned one-shot for tonight that should be pretty tough.” Here he pauses, and a very rehearsed expression of realisation crosses his face. “You know what, it would be great if you could join us tonight, Steve! We really could use some more players for this game.”

“Oh I don’t think he can,” says Will at the same time Steve says, “That sounds awesome, I’m in!” Will kicks him surreptitiously under the counter, but Mike’s already saying:

“Cool! See you tonight!” Will finds himself torn between glaring at Mike and glaring at Steve, both of whom grin back at him mischievously. After a minute of this staring, Lucas, who hasn’t been filled in on the entire situation and is still operating under the misguided belief that Will has a crush on *Robin* , breaks the silence.

“And you are also totally welcome to play with us, Robin.”

“Oh, thanks,” she says, breaking into a grin of her own. “I wouldn’t miss this for the world.”

Four hours later, Will is sitting at the small game table in the Wheeler’s basement, wedged between the boy he likes and the boy that the boy he likes *thinks* that he likes, wondering how his life got so complicated.

“Oh come on, Lucas! That’s bullshit and you know it.”

“How? *How?* Explain to me how that’s bullshit, Dustin?”

“Because you can’t cast Animal Friendship on a human!” he shouts.

“And why the hell not? Are humans not animals? Take a fucking biology class.”

“Mike, talk some sense into him!” pleads Dustin.

“I’m gonna allow it, actually,” Mike decides. “Lucas, creative use of Animal Friendship. Good job.”

“*Thank* you,” says Lucas, sticking his tongue out at Dustin.

“This is an outrage! There are rules for a reason and if you can’t follow them...” Dustin continues his rant and Will tunes out.

He watches Steve’s face as the boys bicker. He looks like he’s positively lost with both the game and the conversation, but having a great time nonetheless. Robin (who’s reasons for being here are, in equal parts: wanting to provide moral support for Will, wanting to keep Steve in check, and wanting a front row seat to the spectacle that is sure to follow) is grinning as she looks back and forth from Dustin to Lucas, loving every minute of the drama. Will tries not to let his eyes drift over to Mike’s face, but they’re drawn there as if by magnets. He’s facing the squabbling pair, interjecting now and then with his official opinion as Dungeon Master, but his eyes keep flicking back to Steve. Afterall, this whole night is his bizarre scheme

of getting Steve and Will together. It also crosses Will's mind that maybe Mike only wants to annoy him and isn't *actually* trying to set them up, which would honestly be a relief. Well, regardless if Will's annoyance is Mike's sole goal or not, it sure is working.

"Oh no! The Demilich staggers towards Sir Steven, swiping at him with a long bony claw!" Mike grasps dramatically at the air in front of him, demonstrating. "One more step and he'll have him! Will the Wise, your action!"

"Uh, is it my turn?" he asks, confused.

"WILL THE WISE, YOUR ACTION!" he repeats urgently.

"Okay, okay! I, um, I cast Protection from Evil and Good on Steve!"

"Will the Wise raises his mighty staff in the air, muttering an incantation. A surge of light encompasses Sir Steven, who is now protected from the dreaded Demilich." Here he drops the dramatic voice he's been using for the narration and speaks normally. "Wow it was really nice of you to save Steve like that." Oh god. What is Mike doing? "That was, like, super brave, right, Steve?"

"Oh, yeah totally brave!" agrees Steve, far too eagerly. Oh no. Oh god. Will catches Steve's eyes with a glare, attempting to wordlessly remind him of the argument they had earlier (this argument having gone something like this: "Seriously Steve, don't do this." "Don't do what? I'm just gonna go in there and talk you up to Mike." "Absolutely do not do that." "I'm gonna do it." "Do *not* ." "I'm gonna. "). Steve, however, seems immune to Will's attempted angry telepathy and continues: "Will is such a brave guy, huh Mike?"

"Oh definitely!" nods Mike. "He's also, like, totally nice."

"Oh yeah! The sweetest guy in the world!" agrees Steve, nodding like a maniac. "And so creative! Look at these drawings!" he says as he gestures to the walls where much of Will's art is displayed.

"I know! He's a total artist!"

By now the rest of the party is looking bewildered between the two boys and Robin is wearing a shit eating grin. She's the only one besides Will (who is currently red as tomato and staring at the pair with alternately mortified and furious eyes) who understands exactly what's going on. And yeah, she knows that she was supposed to stop Steve from doing something... well, something exactly like this. But this is too good to put a stop to. Watching two boys trying to convince each other to date the same guy? Priceless.

Will, however, has a different opinion. His opinion is that he is, in fact, currently in hell, paying for his sins.

"And totally smart, too," says Steve, sort of aggressively. Their bizarre battle of compliments is sort of getting heated now, due in part to a natural competitive streak on Steve's side, but also some sort of possessiveness on Mike's part. Which is completely stupid considering he started this, but he's always been that way with his friends.

"The smartest! He's also..." Mike struggles to think of something else to say. They've been going a while now and they've run through just about every positive attribute there is. "Well, he's really loyal."

"Definitely," agrees Steve, a little less aggressively. He's running out of things to say too. He looks at Will for inspiration. "And he... has such nice brown eyes?"

"Hazel."

"Oh, right." The two stare at each other for a minute. "Hazel." They fall silent, Steve looking like he's run out of things to say and Mike looking like he's said too much.

Eventually, Max breaks the silence:

"The *fuck* was that about?"

Yeah, thinks Will, that's what I'd like to know.

Notes for the Chapter:

Hi everyone! Bit of a sillier chapter this time, but it's a good break from the angst, at least for me.

Thanks so much for reading! I would love to hear any of your thoughts in the comments!

8. so real in the dark

Summary for the Chapter:

The night of the eventful D&D game, Will and Mike have a sleepover. And some secrets come tumbling out.

“The *fuck* was that about?” demands Max, after the bizarre battle of compliments between Steve and Mike has come to an abrupt end.

“Nothing,” shout Steve, Mike, and Will at the same time.

“No seriously,” says Dustin. “That was really weird.”

“Yeah, what’s going on?” asks Lucas.

“Nothing,” asserts Mike. “Really nothing. So anyway, the Demilich-”

“No, no, no,” interrupts Lucas. “Something was *definitely* going on. It sort of seemed like-” And Will’s heart clenches in his chest, knowing exactly what that seemed like. But just then, the bowl of chips that has been teetering near the table’s edge for a while now topples over and smashes on the ground.

“Shit!” yells Mike. “I’ll grab the broom, everyone be careful where you step!” While everyone is fussing over the mess (and Dustin is picking chips from between the shards of glass and eating them), Will silently thanks the gods of gravity and good timing for the distraction. But then he sees Eleven wiping her nose in his periphery. By the time Will turns to look at her, she’s placed her hands behind her back, but not before he notices a blotch of red on the sleeve. He gives her a grateful smile. The gods of gravity and serendipity have nothing on Eleven Hopper.

Thankfully, the great chip calamity was successful in shifting the focus away from Will and the strange string of compliments he’s just

been showered with. Thank god for teens' short attention spans. The rest of the game is relatively uneventful. Well, uneventful might be the wrong word; it *is* eventful, but only in the regularly chaotic way that has come to be expected when this particular group of young people gets together. Lucas and Dustin get into another screaming match. Max threatens to dump Lucas' ass. Robin laughs at dumb shit Steve says, ending up nearly choking on a pretzel. El uses her powers to get herself another soda from the fridge without getting up. You know, normal kid stuff. And everyone but Will seems to forget about the weirdness of earlier. He tries to laugh and nod along with the rest, but the stress of earlier hasn't yet worn off.

By the time everyone starts shuffling out the door, Will is exhausted and just wants to go home. Maybe he'll make himself a hot cocoa and curl up with a blanket even though it's entirely too warm out for that. Maybe he'll hang out with Jonathan and listen to music. Or maybe he'll just go to bed and have a good cry. It's been a fucking stressful night, okay? But before he can mumble his goodbyes and flee the house to go do any of that, he feels Mike's hand at his shoulder.

"Hey, wanna sleep over?" he asks hopefully.

Will could say no. He really could, and honestly sort of feels like it. As much as he hates to admit it, it's become sort of hard to be around Mike lately. Now it's not only the heartache that comes from unrequited (and likely unrequitable) love, but also the stress of keeping those feelings hidden. Every second Will spends with him, he needs to be on high alert; don't blush, don't touch, don't sit too close. It's exhausting. But even now, Will can't help but smile back at Mike. Because even though it is hard to be around him sometimes, Mike is still one of his favourite people in the world. He makes him laugh like no one else does, makes him feel safer than he does with anyone else. Makes him feel loved. Maybe not in the way he'd like, but in a way that he needs nonetheless. He doesn't know where he'd be without Mike and his friendship. Maybe he'd still be sitting alone on that swing set.

"Sure," he smiles. "Sleepover sounds good."

* * *

Neither of the boys can sleep. This shouldn't come as a surprise given the truly astounding volume of cola they've consumed over the last few hours (Will's not sure what the exact conversion rate is, but he guesses that the amount of caffeine they've consumed is roughly comparable to doing about three lines of cocaine). Or maybe Will's sleeplessness is just a result of a stressful and event-filled day. Whatever the case may be, it's two a.m. and both boys are wide awake.

"I don't know, dude. I think Luke's supposed to be human."

"Okay sure, but *how* can he be a human?" says Mike, gesturing wildly from where he's plopped down on the couch. "I mean, if we're meant to believe that the events of the movies are taking place 'a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away', then how could he possibly be a human being? Did humans once have the technology to travel between galaxies, but the humans left on earth have since lost the ability? Or did humans somehow evolve independently in a separate galaxy? Or are we meant to infer some sort of time travel?"

"...I think we're just supposed to accept them as human and not think about it too much."

"But the implications of human beings in a different galaxy are—"

"I know, I know." This is not the first time they've had this conversation. "Tell you what, if I ever meet George Lucas, I'll ask him."

"Good. Also ask him why he felt the need to make Luke and Leia kiss. That was just uncomfortable for everyone."

"Will do," nods Will. Then, after a minute, "Was that what it felt like when you kissed El?" Wow, he did *not* mean to ask that. Apparently his filter disappears entirely after two a.m.

“Sort of,” says Mike, after giving it some thought. “Was that what it was like for you?” Oh yeah, he’s also kissed El. That’s a thing that happened. He almost forgot in the midst of all the other drama.

“I guess so. I mean it definitely didn’t... feel like it’s supposed to.” Not like what Robin told him; not like holding the sun in his chest. “And Eleven does actually sort of feel like my sister, especially since Mom and the chief got together.”

“Oh yeah! I guess you guys would be step-siblings if they got married, right?”

“Guess so.”

“Then it really would be a Luke-Leia situation.” Not wanting to get Mike talking about Star Wars again, Will changes the subject:

“Hey, good campaign today, by the way.”

“Oh thanks,” beams Mike. If there’s one thing he likes talking about more than Star Wars, it’s Dungeons & Dragons. “I’m glad it turned out well. I sort of just threw it together quickly because I wanted...” He drifts off, looking a little guilty.

“...Because you wanted an excuse to embarrass me in front of Steve?” he supplies. They haven’t talked about this yet tonight and it was bound to come up.

“Okay, first of all I wasn’t trying to *embarrass* you!”

“Really? Could have fooled me.”

“No, look, I was just trying to help you look good in front of the guy you like.”

“I don’t...” *Like Steve*. “...want you to do that again. Please. You acted super weird and everyone knew something was going on.”

“I was very natural! I’m sure no one had a clue.”

“No you weren’t and yes they did,” he sighs. “Look, Mike, I don’t want them to know... about me. Not yet. So please don’t do

something like that again, alright?" He hates how small his voice sounds.

"I didn't... shit, I didn't think about that. You're right. Sorry."

"No, it's okay." Mike still looks guilty so he adds, "Really. It's okay."

"Alright," he nods. After a minute he says softly, "...But you know they'd be cool with it, right? If you did tell them?" Will does *know* this. He's just not sure if he believes it. There's a difference.

"You really think so?"

"Totally!" he assures. "I think even Steve. And he's, like, a total jock mouth breather." That makes Will laugh.

"Nah, he's a good guy." Mike sort of grunts, but doesn't answer. "What?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing? Cause it seems like you might have something to say-"

"I just don't get what you see in him, that's all," blurts Mike. Right. Steve is supposed to be his crush.

"Well obviously. You don't like boys."

"No... I mean yes, but that's not what I meant," he sighs. "I just don't think he's good enough for you, that's all."

"Good enough for me?" repeats Will.

"Yeah. I mean, you're so smart and he's... well he's Steve. And you're so nice and he's, like, sort of loud and rough." After a minute, he adds, "And he doesn't even know what colour your eyes are."

"What does that matter? And Steve's your friend too, I don't get why you're being so hard on him." It feels strange to defend his fake crush from his real one, but Steve really is his friend and he doesn't like hearing Mike talk about him like this.

“No, Steve’s *fine* , it just seems sort of weird that you like him.” And Will feels like he’s just been punched in the gut.

“...You think the idea of me liking a boy is *weird* , Mike?” *Weirdo. Fairy. Freak*, his brain screams at him.

“What? No! Fuck, Will I’m sorry that’s not what I-”

“Is that why you’ve been acting so weird since I told you I’m gay?” His eyes are burning, but he wills himself not to cry. “Because you think I’m just some... queer weirdo?”

“No, Will,” says Mike, looking panicked. “That’s not... If I’ve been acting differently that’s not why, okay?”

“Then *why* ?” He’s near tears now. “Because ever since I’ve told you, you’ve been... different. Like all that shit tonight when you were talking to Steve.”

“No, I...” he seems unable to finish the sentence.

“Whatever. I guess I was stupid to think that you’d be okay with this. That anyone would be.” Here Mike looks up, panicked, and grabs Will by the shoulders, making him look him in the eyes.

“No. Listen,” he says, voice steady. “I am completely okay with you being gay. One hundred percent. You’re my best friend and nothing will ever change that.” When Will doesn’t respond, he keeps going. “And if you really like Steve... then I like him too, okay?”

“I don’t fucking like Steve, Micheal,” blurts Will. Because it’s two in the morning, and he’s exhausted, and he’s so fucking sick of the lying. Mike lets his hands slip from Will’s shoulders.

“What?”

“I don’t. I just told you that so you’d stop asking but obviously it just made everything worse and it was stupid and I regret it but that’s the truth. I don’t like him.”

“But why did you...” he drifts off, eyebrows drawn together. “I don’t understand. Why would you lie to me? Why wouldn’t you just tell me

who you really like?” Will sighs, drawing his knees to his chest. He’s just so tired of hiding.

“Three guesses as to why I wouldn’t want to tell you, Mike, the name of the boy I like.”

“Because you don’t... trust me?”

“I actually happen to trust you a lot, so no. Guess again.”

“...Because it’s someone I know?”

“Closer, but no.”

“...Because you’re worried about how I’ll react?”

“Sort of, but still no.”

“I don’t understand, Will. Why wouldn’t you just tell me the truth?” He looks confused and hurt. Will hates seeing him like that and he hates that it’s his fault. Well, he can’t imagine what he has to say next will make things better, but he knows he has to say it. No more lies. No more hiding. And no more fucking shame.

“Because it’s you, Mike,” he shouts. Then, quieter: “...I like *you* .”

* * *

Two weeks earlier, Mike had just finished planning a short campaign (it would end up taking eleven hours to play, but he didn’t know that yet) and decided he’d go on a bit of a bike ride to see El. He glanced up at the clouds as he hopped on his bike. They looked a bit menacing, but they’d hold until he reached the cabin. Probably.

As he rode, he wondered to himself if it was weird that he was going to hang out with his ex-girlfriend just a few days after their breakup.

The answer was probably yes, he figured. But then again, they didn't exactly have a typical relationship to begin with. Not even their break up had been conventional. I mean, Mike wasn't sure exactly how break ups were supposed to go, but he was pretty sure they didn't usually end with a hug and a shared smile of relief. Neither of them had even cried. And they had played a game of monopoly together, like fifteen minutes after.

So yeah, maybe this wasn't a normal thing to do, but neither Mike nor El had ever been much concerned with being normal. He actually thought that maybe that was one reason for the break up; he sometimes got the impression that they were both not-normal in the same way (or opposite way, depending how you looked at it). He wasn't actually sure about Eleven -hell, he was barely sure about himself- but he saw it sometimes in the way she smiled at Max, or the way she looked at her when she thought no one was watching. God knows he'd looked at Will the exact same way hundreds of times. But that was a line of thought that could go nowhere, so he put a stop to it. Or at least he tried. Will had a way of occupying just about every square inch of his mental real estate.

By the time he'd reached the cabin, he was soaked to the skin. Those mean-looking clouds hadn't held off afterall. As he shivered his way up the drive, he noticed another bike laying on the gravel. She must have already had company. He thought for a moment that he shouldn't bother her and could come back another time. Then again, the prospect of riding all the way back in the rain was not one that seemed particularly appealing. He made his way to the door and knocked. No answer. Probably couldn't even hear him over the pounding of the rain, he figured. He knocked one more time, and when there was no answer, he let himself in. Surely El wouldn't mind (he couldn't even count how many times she'd burst into his house unannounced). He stepped through the threshold and was just about to call out a greeting when he saw them.

“What. The actual. Fuck,” he heard himself say, though he hadn’t meant to. He didn’t want to say anything, just wanted to get out of there, preferably before he burst into tears. He spun on his heel and ran out into the rain, trying to process what he’d just seen. Will. And Eleven. Kissing. Fuck, he felt stupid. How could he have been so wrong? It would have been laughable if it wasn’t so fucking sad.

Dimly, he heard Will calling after him. He didn’t answer, didn’t want to answer. He just wanted to get on his bike and ride away. But then Will was behind him, grabbing onto his wrist and looking up at him with those beautiful, pleading eyes.

Mike knew they were talking, but he didn’t register much of what either of them were saying. That is, not until he heard Will’s small, scared voice saying, “No, you were... right. You were right.” He was right? About what? He tried to remember what had been said, what they had been talking about. The rain fight. The yelling. *It’s not my fault you don’t like girls* . Oh. Could he have meant...? No, of course not. Mike had been projecting when he’d said that, had been making things up. He heard himself reaching, searching for any other explanation until Will spoke again. “ *Mike*.” And the expression on his face could not be mistaken. Mike had seen that very expression, that mix of fear and shame and confusion in the mirror too many times not to know what it meant. Will was... Will was like him.

* * *

Hopper had interrupted him before they had gotten to talk about it, so as they shuffled into his kitchen, Mike’s head was still swimming with thoughts and questions. He forced himself to wait until they had both changed into dry clothes and were settled in his room before he asked.

“So,” he heard himself say.

“So...?”

“So you don’t, uh,” he faltered. What if he was wrong? He took a deep breath. “...like girls?”

“Nope.” Woah. Okay, but that didn’t necessarily mean that he was... well that he was like Mike.

“Do you... um, do you like-” God, he could barely get the words out.

“Boys,” Will finished for him. “Yeah.”

Over the next few minutes, Will explained to him how and why he came to be kissing El. As if that was what Mike cared about right now. As if the only thing that mattered wasn’t that Will liked boys. *Boys.*

* * *

Over the next few days, Mike had told himself over and over not to get his hopes up. Just because Will liked boys, didn’t mean Will liked him. And why would he? Mike knew he wasn’t particularly good looking, or cool, or muscular, or anything else that might make him worth liking. Still, he found that he couldn’t quite stop himself from hoping.

In the meantime, he tried hard to act like someone who wasn’t in love with their best friend. How did people who weren’t in secret gay love with their best friend respond to learning their friend was gay and had a crush on a guy? Probably... teasing, right? Like, gentle, supportive teasing. So he forced himself to put on a mischievous little grin and ask Will who he liked, in a way that he hoped didn’t give

away the fact that he was desperately hoping that it was him.

As Mike suggested more and more guys that Will could potentially like and as Will kept shooting them down, one after another, Mike couldn't help but let his hopes rise just a little bit. If Will didn't like Tommy or Greg or Keith... then maybe, just maybe, he liked him.

His hopes were practically soaring by the time he got Steve's name. He was the last potential crush Mike could think of and it seemed unlikely that it's him. Come on, there was like a five year age difference. Plus he was a *jock*.

"Yeah! He's our friend and he's nice and he's... okay looking. I mean he has that hair. Oh my god, it's him, isn't it?" But even as he said it, Mike felt sure it couldn't be him. That is, until, he heard Will say:

"Yes. You're right, it is Steve." And Mike's hopes come crashing down.

* * *

Pretending to be cool with Will liking Steve was torture. Plastering on a smile and teasing him in the way he would with any other one of his friends was a torment. But he did it, because he had to. He had to show his support for Will at the same time as hiding his own feelings. Which is why, somehow, he decided it would be a good idea to invite Steve to play D&D with them.

His rationale on this was that it was what he'd do if it were Dustin crushing on Robin or something. Inviting your friend's crush to hang out as a group then trying to talk your friend up to them seemed like the normal thing to do. Right?

Well maybe it was the normal thing to do, but it sure wasn't fucking easy. Sitting at the too-small table with Steve and a blushing Will squished together was not easy or fun for Mike. But he sat there, trying to narrate the game as he usually would, waiting for an opportunity to do perhaps the last thing he wanted to: try to get Steve Harrington to like Will back.

He saw his dreaded opportunity when Steve's character ended up closest to the Demilich. He made the monster approach, then asked Will for his action. It wasn't strictly speaking Will's turn, but that didn't matter. Wasn't the whole point of the game to try to help Will look good in front of Steve? Plus, he just knew that given the opportunity Will would use his only action to protect the person who needed it most. That was just the way he was.

After Will cast Protection on Steve, Mike took a deep breath, then forced himself to do what he had set out to do.

"Wow it was really nice of you to save Steve like that. That was, like, super brave, right, Steve?" It almost hurt to say the words. Of *course* Will was brave, but he deserved someone who didn't need to have that pointed out to them.

"Oh, yeah totally brave! Will is such a brave guy, huh Mike?" Steve said.

"Oh definitely!" he nods. He hadn't been expecting to have to say more, but Steve sort of set him up for it. "He's also, like, totally nice."

Mike wasn't entirely sure what happened after that. Steve just kept piling on the compliments, so he kept going too, not willing to pass up an opportunity to talk up his friend. After that, it almost became an argument, a battle of trying to one-up each other in their compliments. They were being weird, Mike realised they were being weird. But he didn't seem to be able to make himself stop, either.

So they just kept going and going, until Steve said something about Will having nice brown eyes and before he could stop himself, Mike heard himself say:

“Hazel.” Now, Mike was admittedly no expert on heterosexuality, but he was pretty sure that it wasn’t fucking straight to correct someone on the exact shade of your bro’s eyes. He felt his cheeks start to warm. The room was quiet for another minute before the questions started.

“The *fuck* was that about?”

“No seriously, that was really weird.”

“Yeah, what’s going on?”

Mike was just wondering if he was too young to have a heart attack when the bowl of chips teetered over the table’s edge and smashed onto the floor. As he leapt up to go get the broom, grateful for the distraction, he noticed El wiping away the red from under her nose. He gave her a grateful nod. He was pretty sure she knew about him, but he didn’t care. He was just thankful for her friendship and for the momentary distraction.

The rest of the game had been a blur. Mike tried to act normal, but his head was swimming with thoughts and dreads. He’d fucked things up. Everyone probably knew about him and if they didn’t know, they suspected. Plus Will was probably mad at him. Fuck, Will.

Desperately, he asked Will to sleep over before he had the chance to leave. Mike wanted the chance to explain, to fix things. For one terrifying moment, he’d thought Will would say no, that he’d fucked things up beyond repair. But then Will nodded and Mike could breathe again.

* * *

Now it's two in the morning and here he is, sitting in front of Will, beautiful Will, who's just told him through tears that he doesn't like Steve. He likes him. Him, *Mike*.

* * *

Mike just stares at him and panic starts to swell in Will's chest. Oh god, Mike's going to hate him. He opens his mouth to say something, to take it back, to lie, to do anything to try and fix this, but then Mike's leaning forward and suddenly they're kissing.

And it feels like holding the sun in his chest.

Notes for the Chapter:

Yay!! We made it to the end!! There will be a short epilogue, but this is basically it. I really really hope you liked it! Thank you so much to everyone who has read and commented. It means a lot to me <3

9. when the light gets into your heart

Summary for the Chapter:

Another gay movie night, this time with a few more attendees.

At their movie nights, it has become almost tradition for Robin to burst in a few minutes late, arms laden with enough junk food to feed a group three times their size. Today, her haul includes six bags of chips, two cartons of ice cream, four two-liter soda bottles, and a selection of five different candies. She dumps it all on the counter as she shuffles into the Byers' living room.

"Worry not," she says dramatically to the three kids already waiting for her on the couch, "I have arrived! And I come bearing snacks!" The kids give a cheer, equally excited to see Robin and the mountain of junk food she brings.

"Thanks Robin," Will smiles at her as she takes her seat between him and El on the couch. To his other side is Mike, their hands linked between them. Things are still new and tentative, but they're good. God, they're good. Will has never been so happy in his life, and, judging by the size of his smile, neither has Mike.

"So, are we ready to get this party started?" asks Robin, like she didn't get here literally one minute ago.

"Waiting for one more," says El.

"Oh yeah?" she says, raising her eyebrows. "And who might that be?" But she doesn't have to wonder for long, because the 'who' happens to be walking through the door at that very moment.

"Uh, hey everyone!" says Max as she walks in.

"Ah, a new recruit!" says Robin, making the younger girl blush. "Welcome to gay movie night!"

"Thanks," mutters Max, growing redder still. She takes her place beside El on the couch.

"Of course," continues Robin, "The more gays the merrier, that's what I always say."

"Hush, Robin," chastises Will, knowing what it's like to be a victim of her good-natured teasing.

"Alright, alright," she submits, putting her hands in the air. Now she offers the two younger girls a warm, genuine smile. "Really, we're glad you're here."

"Thanks," nods Max. "So, uh, what are we watching?"

"Well there's some debate about that, actually," Mike answers. "See, Will here is advocating for a John Hughes movie, while I've been trying to convince him that Hughes movies are probably among the straightest films in existence and have no place whatsoever in a gay movie club."

"Okay, well first of all, you're wrong. Second of all, I don't see you suggesting anything better," challenges Will.

"I already suggested one! *Top Gun* is—"

"Not in any way, shape, or form a queer film?" offers Will. "I agree."

"Excuse me?" Mike puts a hand on his chest like he's offended. "That is *the* gayest movie I have ever seen. Did you not see the beach ball scene?"

"Oh I saw it," says Will, suddenly distracted by the memory. "Okay but one homoerotic volleyball scene does not a queer film make."

"Is it always like this?" Max whispers to El as the boys bicker.

"Yes," she answers. "It sometimes takes longer to pick the movie than it does to watch it." Meanwhile, the boys are still arguing whether John Hughes movies or 80's action movies are gayler.

"Okay, okay," says Robin as finally steps in. "Well, the lesbians have the majority here, so I think we're gonna veto the one with all the sweaty men and literally not a single woman." The girls nod in agreement and Mike pouts. "So Will, which Hughes movie are we

watching?”

“Glad you asked, Robin,” says Will as he goes to get the tape. “You see, I feel like there are considerable queer themes in *The Breakfast Club*, and-” There’s a groan from the rest of the movie club members.

“We *just* watched that, dude!”

“Okay, two weeks ago is not ‘just’ and besides-”

“Is that the one with the library and the crying?” asks Eleven.

“Okay, other stuff happens besides crying in a library-” argues Will.

“Debatable,” Mike cuts in. “And there’s nothing gay about it, really.”

“Well, admittedly Allison and Claire *are* in love,” interjects Robin.

“Sure,” says Will, happy to have someone on his side. “Plus Andrew is a little... not straight. But anyway, my point is that the themes of identity, conformity, stereotyping, and being an outsider all relate to-” He’s interrupted by Robin, who is pretending to snore loudly. He hurls a cushion at her indignantly, which incites a full scale pillow fight.

As he is slapped with pillows from all sides, giggling wildly and shielding his face, Will can’t help but think to himself how happy he is. He never thought he’d have this, but here he is, with his friends and his *boy* friend (Will is a little bit in love with that word), talking and laughing with them without having to hide a single thing. And he’s so goddamn happy.

Eventually, the pillow war ends in a draw and the others reluctantly agree to watch *The Breakfast Club*, yet again. They sigh in defeat as he puts in the tape, but he can see the smiles they try to keep from their faces. They love this movie as much as he does. Besides, the movie they watch doesn’t even matter. What matters is that they’re all squeezed onto the same couch, passing around popcorn and

yelling at the screen. What matters is that they're here, together.

Will settles into the couch, taking Mike's hand in his as the opening credits start to play.

Hey, hey, hey, hey

Ooh-ooh, ooh-woh

Won't you come see about me ?

Will starts singing along and to his surprise, there are soon four other voices joining his. They're loud and they're off-key, but he'll be damned if it's not the most beautiful thing he's ever heard in his life.

Notes for the Chapter:

Okay, this is it folks! If you've read this far, thank you!!! Especially if you've left kudos or a comment, because that always means a lot to me. Please let me know your thoughts or critiques or ideas for future stories.

Thanks so so much for reading <3